

YOUR WEEK IN CHINA'S CAPITAL

今日北京

BEIJING TODAY

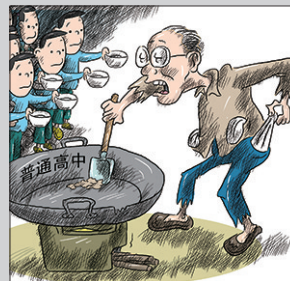
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WeChat Lobs
VoIP Bomb at
China's Telecoms

The threat of free calls for WeChat's user base is terrifying mobile operators. **Page 4**

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Debt Swells
to Billions

High schools are swimming in debt from weak aid. **Page 5**

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Art Explores
Man, Nature

Henning Olav Espedalis is bringing his apocalyptic art to Beijing. **Page 7**

Tragedy
on Line 5

The death of a woman who became trapped between the platform doors and train at Huixinxijie Nankou Station has started a discussion on subway's safety, or rather its lack thereof. **Page 2**

Tales of Delivery Agents' 'High Pay'
May be Exaggerated

BY DIAO DIAO

It's been a week since the Singles' Day shopping rush, but for delivery agencies the holiday hasn't ended.

According to statistics from the State Post Bureau, the total number of items shipped on November 11 surpassed 88.6 million. That's a three-fold increase over the number of parcels it handles each day. Private couriers carried even more.

A short report on the lives of 10 delivery agents and their salaries has been extremely popular this week.

While past reports said delivery agents earned up to 10,000 yuan per month – more than office staff and highly educated technical workers – the video revealed that

most earn between 5,000 and 8,000 yuan regardless of age and experience.

Pu Yubao, a deliveryman near Minzu University of China, said he is sending about 600 items per day. "Normally I get at most 300 items, but now I'm having to use a car instead of my tricycle," he said.

"We have a base pay of 2,000 yuan. The more you deliver, the more you earn. Each item delivered earns at most 1 yuan, and I have almost 350 items everyday right now," Pu said. He earns about 10,500 yuan each November.

A man surnamed Xu at EMS also said he can earn about 15,000 yuan during the holiday if he works 24-hour shifts and doesn't stop to eat.

Xiaoli at ZTO Express said that it's difficult to earn more than 10,000 yuan even

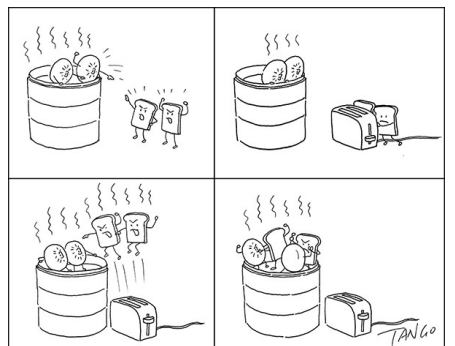
during the Singles' Day sale. "How much you earn depends on how many items you deliver, how long you do the job and which company you work for," he said. "I earn at most 7,200 yuan during the holiday. I just can't deliver more than 300 items – my body can't take it."

Li Congling is a delivery agent who has been working for three years. She said she earns an extra 3,000 during the Singles' Day season, but even then she earns less than 10,000 yuan.

"Men can't bear the intensity of the job, to say nothing of women," she said.

Delivery work offers people with limited education to earn a good salary. However, that money comes at an extreme physical cost, Pu Yubao said. ■

TOASTER TECH



Comics by Tango (©tango2010)



Woman Killed by Subway's Lack of Safety Devices

BY DIAO DIAO

The city is refocusing its attention on public safety after the tragic death of a woman who became trapped between the platform doors and subway car at Huixinxijie Nankou station on Line 5 on November 6.

The woman was severely injured when the train began to move and fell from the platform as soon as it pulled away. She died shortly after being rescued from the rails.

Line 5 was built in 2007 and was the city's first subway line to feature safety doors on the platform. It is also one of the busiest lines, with cars serving working class communities in far-flung areas like Tiantongyuan.

Jia Peng, a spokesman for Beijing Subway Company, said the State Administration of Work Safety is still investigating the accident.

A subway clerk surnamed Wang told Chinanews.com that the doors are not equipped with any monitoring devices. A clerk at the

company that made the doors confirmed that Beijing's subway doors do not have any safety monitoring equipment.

Wang said it's not a problem of cost. In Guangzhou, many subway cars feature safety devices. "Each city has its own standard for what is essential. There are no national safety requirements," Wang said.

Zhang Huifen, a subway coordinator on Line 6, said the monitoring devices were omitted from the trains because the city is simply too busy.

"Safety monitors are designed to be very sensitive. But with people being pushed against the platform doors and the car doors on Beijing's packed subways, the false alarms would seriously delay departure times and cause even more problems," she said.

Online commentators noted that teaching passengers to yield when facing a crowded train instead of to bash their way in could be another way to prevent such tragedies from occurring. ■



Professor Attacked for Speech at Sex Festival

BY SHU PENGQIAN

性文化节



CFP Photos

In the middle of his lecture on "Sex as the Source of Happiness," sexology professor Peng Xiaohui had the foul surprise of getting a bucket of wastewater dumped over his head by an angry listener.

But it's less the abnormal reaction that is surprising than the venue: Peng was speaking at the 12th Sex Culture Festival in Guangzhou, Guangdong province.

"I was about four minutes into my speech when a middle-age woman suddenly charged the stage and dumped something over my head," Peng said. Although Peng managed to dodge some of the attack and security guards took down the woman, he was still splashed with scum.

After cleaning himself up, Peng returned to the stage to continue his speech. The woman, who has not been named, told police the bucket con-

tained a mixture of food coloring and rancid biowaste.

The *Guangzhou Daily* reported that the festival's organizing committee had learned that some "anti-pornography organizations" were enlisting volunteers to disrupt the events. Peng was reportedly their main target.

Although police have not disclosed any details about the case, some people have praised the woman's behavior.

In an editorial on Dayoo.com, commentators said that professors like Peng violate human morality and "encourage criminals" by publicizing abnormal ideas. Other noted that manufacturers and vendors of sex toys are the primary organizers of the festival.

More moderate readers said that it's understandable for Peng to research sex, but that it is improper to discuss

his findings in public. Many defended the woman's radical behavior as "essential to protect the traditional virtues of the Chinese nation."

Sex is taboo in modern China and has been especially taboo since the Qing dynasty. In the current culture, speaking about sex is shameful even in private. Although the country has had something of a sexual revolution since the 1980s, conservative thought still dominates public discourse.

But many defended Peng's speech about sex as harmless and important for Chinese society. "What professor Peng teaches is necessary for adults," said Xiao Xu, a student.

"The argument about sex is one that should be based on reason rather than overwhelmed by emotion," said Wang Qingling, a critic. ■

Irony Couples Tie the Knot on 'Double Eleven'

BY DIAO DIAO

This year's Singles' Day saw a six-fold increase in marriage registrations thanks to couples wanting the irony of a marriage license that reads "November 11."

The *Dezhou Daily* reported that 96 couples applied for their marriage license on November 11 in Dezhou, Shandong province, up from an average of 15 per day. The number of marriages exceeded the 83 who registered on Valentine's Day and the 51 who registered on Qixi, also known as Chinese Valentine's Day.

Sun Jiejie and Li Manbin were one of the couples that went to register. Their ceremony was on November 12 and they obtained their certificate on November 11.

"Many people want to get rid of their single status on that day. That's what we were waiting for," Sun said.

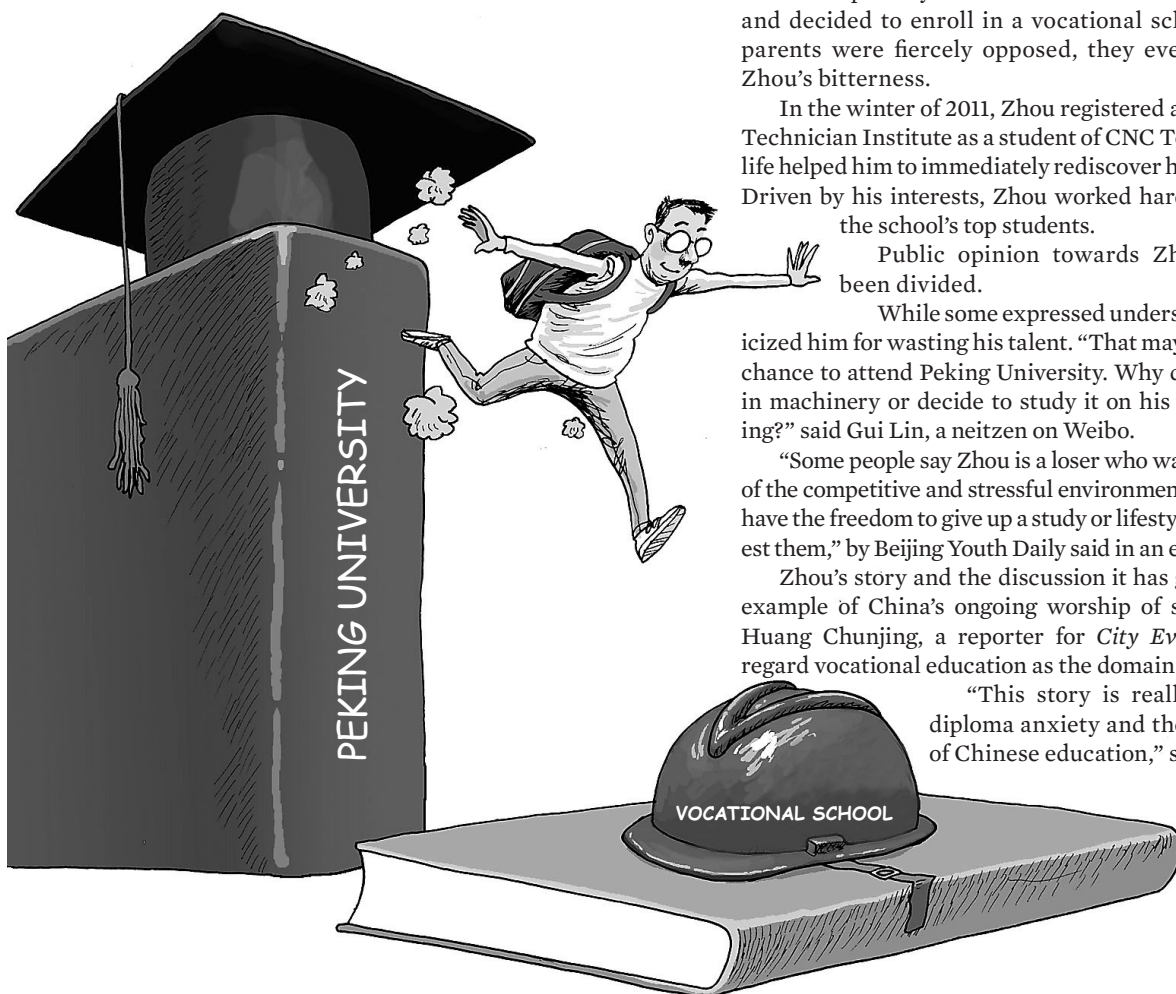
Liaocheng, Shandong province also had more than 140 couples on November 11. Many said that the date also stands for "yixinyiyi," a Chinese idiom that means "to give something your all."

In Hebi, Henan province, the registration office processed 137 couples on November 11.

"Many people called ahead to ask if they needed to make an appointment to get married on November 11. We decided to open another window to speed up registrations," said Qi Liping, an officer at the Hebi marriage registration office. Some registration offices in Nanchang, Jiangxi province allowed couples to book appointments to cut down on the crowds. ■

Student Abandons Peking U for Vocational School

BY LYNNE WANG



CFP Photos

A student speaker stole attention from the opening ceremony of the National Computing Numerical Final at Beijing Industrial Technician Institute on November 4.

Zhou Hao made the unthinkable decision to drop out of Peking University in 2011 to enroll at the vocational school.

In the summer of 2008, Zhou finished the National College Entrance Exam with a score of 660. He had the fifth highest score of all candidates in Qinghai province. With such an impressive performance, it seemed natural for him to end up in his dream school: Beijing University of Aeronautics and Astronautics. Zhou hoped to turn his hobby of building mechanical and electric gadgets into a career.

The dream fell flat when it reached the ears of Zhou's family, who said he would be "wasting his scores" if he didn't enroll in Tsinghua University or Peking University. After days of persuasion, Zhou was bullied into enrolling in Peking University as a student of bioscience.

His next two years were filled with misery and confusion.

"I was not interested in the subject matter at all – especially the theory. I only love practical things related to machines," Zhou said. But after struggling to adapt to academic atmosphere for two years, Zhou gave up and dropped out.

Zhou spent a year in Shenzhen thinking about his future and decided to enroll in a vocational school. Although his parents were fiercely opposed, they eventually yielded to Zhou's bitterness.

In the winter of 2011, Zhou registered at Beijing Industrial Technician Institute as a student of CNC Technology. His new life helped him to immediately rediscover his passion for study. Driven by his interests, Zhou worked hard to become one of the school's top students.

Public opinion towards Zhou's decision has been divided.

While some expressed understanding, many criticized him for wasting his talent. "That may have been his only chance to attend Peking University. Why didn't he just minor in machinery or decide to study it on his own after graduating?" said Gui Lin, a netizen on Weibo.

"Some people say Zhou is a loser who was forced to drop out of the competitive and stressful environment. But people should have the freedom to give up a study or lifestyle that doesn't interest them," by Beijing Youth Daily said in an editorial.

Zhou's story and the discussion it has generated is a clear example of China's ongoing worship of school brands, said Huang Chunjing, a reporter for *City Evening News*. Many regard vocational education as the domain of the dumb.

"This story is really one of society's diploma anxiety and the sick environment of Chinese education," said Xiong Bingqi, a local educator. ■

Police Go Digital With Traffic Fine Notices

BY DIAO DIAO

Beijing police are making the move to digital technology and replacing paper mailing with text messages to notify drivers when they are fined for traffic violations from November 15.

Bureau officials said it has become inconvenient and ineffective to mail fines as people's hukou address and home address are often different.

"Some people use a different address when they register their car and many

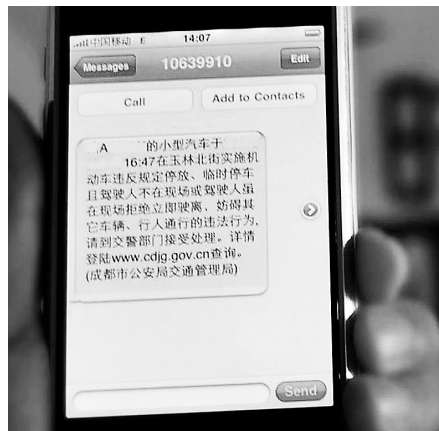


Photo by newscar.com

people just move. It's hard to find the driver and inform them in time," the bureau said. "Most families own electronic devices, so we think it's faster and more convenient to send the message this way."

The new policy will be used to deal with traffic problems recorded by monitor-

ing devices. All violations will be entered into the system and sent by text message to drivers within two days.

From November 15 to January 15, both paper fines and messages will be sent in case some drivers' have changed their phone number. From January 15, all traffic fines will be sent via SMS message.

The bureau is asking drivers to update their contact information as soon as possible to comply with the new policy.

The police also said they are stepping up monitoring of key areas such as highway exits and areas with frequent accidents.

But many drivers are concerned about the safety of the new policy.

Wang Jiang, a taxi driver, said he thought about the message was a fake the first time he saw it. "This may be a good way to save resources, but how will I be able to know whether the message is actually from the police or a forgery?" he said. ■

THE WEEK IN WEIRD

STRANGE HAPPENINGS ON THE CHINESE NEWS WIRE
BY SU DERUI

Police Aim for Wild Pig, Shoot a Woman

The police were called to rein in a rampaging boar at 9 pm on November 4 in the Xianghui community of Fuqing, Fujian province. In their attempt to put the animal down, officers shot a 26-year-old woman surnamed Wang through her chest.

Wang was bleeding uncontrollably when she was taken to the hospital. Doctors said the bullet had become lodged in one of her lungs.

While police did notify residents that they were coming to deal with the boar, they failed to clear the area before opening fire. Residents said the area was still very crowded at the time of the shooting. (iFeng)

Drunken Official Kills Grid in KTV Revenge

An angry official used his pull at the State-run power center of Qixian, Henan province to kill the grid when a KTV refused to supply his party with free liquor.

The official, who identified himself as a director of the local power station, told staff that he would "unleash the wrath of the electric tiger" and ruin their business. As many as 5,000 homes and businesses spent the next six hours in the dark.

Under national regulations governing power suppliers, the employees could still be found criminally liable for abusing their power, the *Beijing News* reported. (Xinhua)

Kidnapper of the Dead Caught in Jiangxi

Police in Lushan, Jiangxi province arrested an urn thief who snatched more than 30 funerary vessels from cemeteries around the country. The culprit, Xu Hui, 40, reportedly amassed 500,000 yuan by ransoming the urns to surviving family members.

Xu came under police radar when the Public Security Bureau of Changde, Hunan province intercepted one of his texts demanding 20,000 yuan for the return of the urn of someone surnamed Yu.

The urn was found abandoned in a ditch in the city after Xu fled. He told police he kowtowed to each urn he stole to ask the dead for forgiveness. (Global Times)

Xinjiang Asks Officials to Speak Uyghur

After 65 years of expecting Uyghurs to speak Chinese, the government of the Xinjiang Autonomous Region finally realized the cause of harmony might be better served by speaking the local language.

The first group of national defense students and military officials were required to enroll in Uyghur-language training classes at Xinjiang University last week. The courses will teach participants the basic grammar and vocabulary needed to conduct their duties. (Xinjiang Daily)

WeChat's Voice May Threaten the Last Telecom Service

BY LYNNE WANG

While Alibaba was grabbing headlines with its staggering Singles' Day sales, Tencent rolled out its latest disruptive technology. Called WeChat Phonebook, the voice over IP (VoIP) app allows WeChat users to make phone calls to their friends using a Wi-Fi or data connection.

The app represents a new arrival to the VoIP market, which thus far has been dominated by Microsoft's Skype and the Cyprus-based Viber. Its integration with a mobile messaging app that has 468 million active users on the Chinese mainland could pose a serious threat to more established players.

From Text to Voice

WeChat Phonebook is the latest in a long line of "over the top" (OTT) technologies that are eroding the business of Chinese telecom operators by steering users away from voice and text and toward Internet data.

Known for its friendly interface and vibrant features – both a sharp contrast to the products of its State-run competitors – WeChat has accumulated hundreds and thousands of users since its release in 2011. The popular app has revolutionized the way Chinese communicate with each other, with voicemail-like audio messages replacing traditional calls and text: the primary services of Chinese telecoms.

According to statistics from the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology, the volume of text messages contracted nearly 18 percent this year. The number of multimedia messages sent fell as much as 30 percent during the first three quarters of this year. China Mobile, the world's largest mobile operator, announced that it lost 2.9 billion yuan in message services in 2013.

With one of their financial pillars knocked away, China Mobile, China Unicom and Chinese Telecom attempted to strike back last year by announcing a special charge for WeChat and blaming the popular app for burdening the network and increasing maintain fees.

"WeChat's operation depends on signaling from our communications base stations, but the requests come so often that WeChat users are a threat to the stability and safety of the network," said Li Yue, a manager at China Mobile. "They are hitching a free ride and leaving us to pick up the bill."

But Pony Ma, Tencent's CEO, called their claims a misdirection. "Building and maintaining the information super highway is the government's job. It's not something that State-run telecom operators actually have to worry about," he said. "If that was the case, the cost of infrastructure would be put on the heads of their users."

Government mediation helped to end the spat, and telecoms said they would take a wait-and-see approach to the popular app. China Unicom was the only mobile operator to form a partnership with WeChat by releasing a specialized SIM card that offered data costs for WeChat users.

But WeChat Phonebook is once again testing the firms' bottom line with its "toll-free calls" and in the process knocking away another core revenue stream of the country's telecoms.

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Coexisting Still an Option

It's still too early to say whether WeChat

Phonebook will replace traditional common calls or trigger a new wave of attacks from large telecom operators.

Becoming "tunnel providers" of data services is the last position Chinese telecoms want in the digital economy.

"Phonebook could leverage the users who have already

joined WeChat. Due to branding and habit, it's easy for the new app to accumulate more users," said by Fu Liang, a local telecom analyst.

If users accept Phonebook the way they did WeChat, providing data exchange services may become the primary job – or only job – of telecom operators, business observers said.

"[Phonebook] could both replace the role of conventional telecom carriers and expand services based on its Internet background," said by Luo Chao, a business observer. "The most promising step Phonebook might attempt is bringing location-based information to mobile search. China Mobile's 12580 and China Telecom's 114 currently offer premium inquiry services for weather, flight booking and ticket purchase, which could also become part of their business model."

Telecom carriers do not appear inclined to merely await their doom. Leaders of the state-run firms declined to comment after the high-profile release of Tencent Phonebook.

"There are two networks controlled by traditional telecom operators: one is responsible for transmitting voice calls, the other for digital data. Although Phonebook bypasses the first network to offer IP based calls, it still has to go through the second network," said by Zhu Di, a reporter for TechWeb.com.

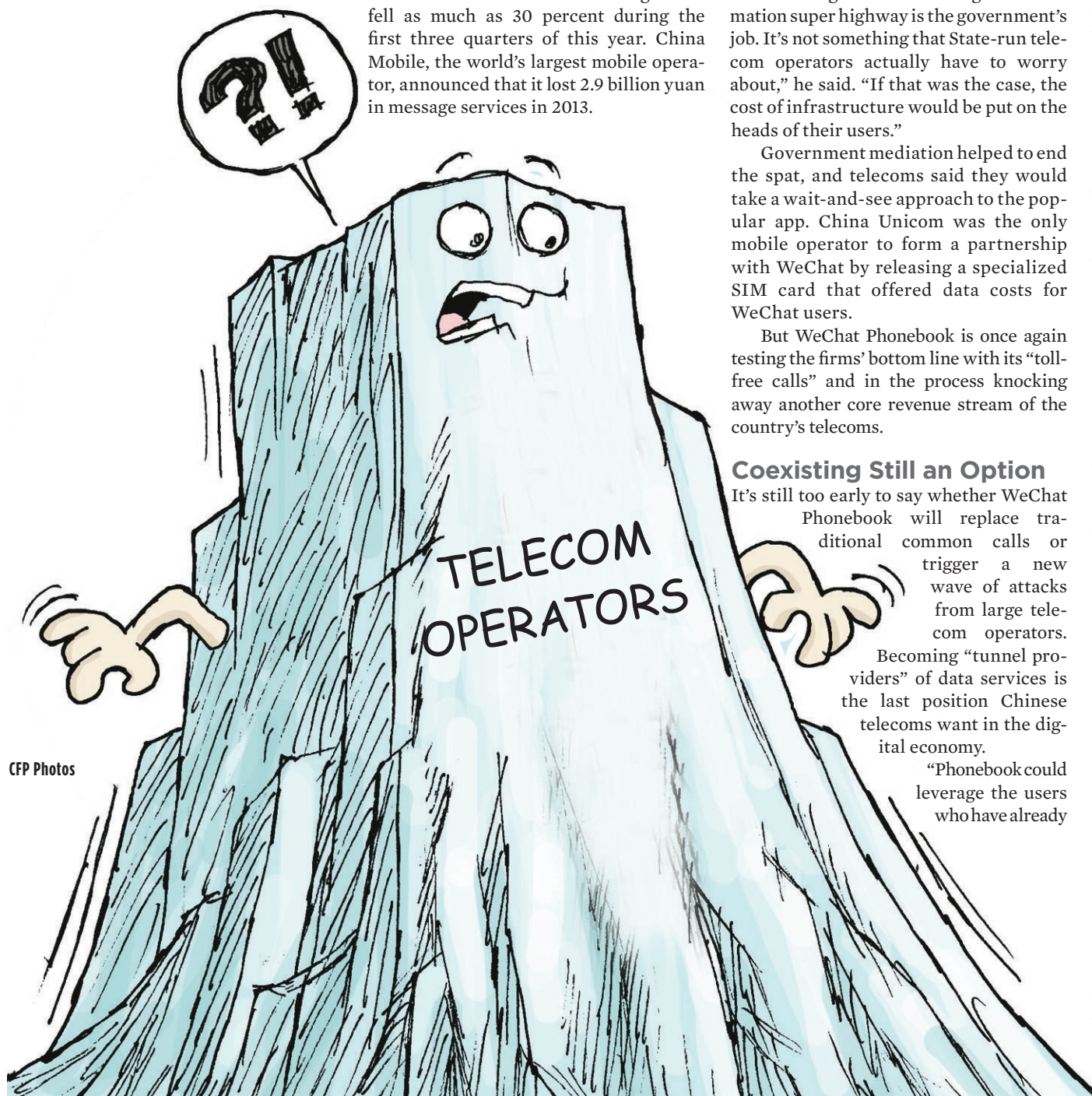
In other words, as the controller of network infrastructure, China Telecom and its counterparts could still benefit from collecting fees from WeChat and other OTT products. Retooling the data billing model may become an essential question for telecom carriers.

"The trend of traditional telecoms becoming marginalized is inevitable. The best solution is to admit reality and focus on how to better 'operate' Internet data. It's reasonable to redefine ourselves as the providers of an intelligent tunnel," said a telecom leader who refused to be named.

The solution was adopted by China Mobile, who recently announced it would merge messaging into its data connection services in the following year.

Deploying their own OTT service might be another solution. China Telecom partnered with EasyNet to co-develop a WeChat-like app named Credulity. In order to attract users, the app invited current users of China Telecom to register and use it for free.

The boom in OTT services will force traditional telecom operators to survive without their dominance over text and voice services. Although it seems too early to say which side will win, telecoms and service apps will have to coexist in the short term. ■



CFP Photos

Public High Schools Burdened with Debt, Anchored by Face

BY YANG XIN



The heavy debts of many public high schools are rooted in poor planning by local government.

Photo by CFP

There seems to be no way out for Shan Jinyi, president of the Kaifeng No.1 High School in Henan province. His school's latest audit revealed 80 million yuan of debt owed to more than 600 creditors.

"On any normal five-day work week, I spend three of those days at the courthouse listening to our creditors complain," Shan said.

Shan's situation is hardly unique.

Kaifeng High School, a century-old elite school in Henan, is saddled with 24 million yuan of debt and Kaifeng No. 25 High School has its own debt of 7 million yuan. Xiayi No.1 High School piled up 100 million yuan of debt in the last 11 years: 10 million yuan of that comes from the interest alone.

At the National People's Congress of 2014, several delegates pitched ideas for ways to bring down the schools' crippling debts, which soared past 160 billion yuan in 2010.

Rooted in Policy

High school debt seems to have its roots in a 1999 policy to expand enrollment. The Ministry of Education said that having a better-educated workforce would help China to escape slowdown and deflation during the Asian financial crisis.

Although it meant well, the ministry's move set many schools up for ruin.

Public labeling prevented schools from engaging in the kind of fundraising that would be needed to meet the ministry's requirements. *Chinese Education Newspaper* reported that in most of the country, local government only provided schools with enough money to pay staff salaries. Expansion to accommodate more students could only be financed through banks.

"The government's role in public high schools' fundraising process is vague. There is no clear regulation regarding how much education funding the government should bear. The government contributes less than half of the education funds that schools need to function," said Wang Ming, a researcher at the ministry's Education Research and Development Center.

"High school education always gets the short straw in financial appropriation," said Zhang Zhiyong, deputy director of the Shandong Provincial Education Department.

Qiushi explored governmental

expenditures on education in a recent editorial. According to the paper, county-level governments can barely shoulder their responsibilities. It's no surprise that schools in less-developed regions tend to carry the heaviest debt.

School selection fees, once a major source of high school income, are also on the verge of collapse.

Since the 2012 fall semester, the government has pressured high schools to slash the proportion of students who pay a school selection fee for enrollment and to remove the system of quotas within three years.

The imbalance of governmental support between ordinary high schools and model high schools is another core reason. Been selected as a model high school is the dream of many public high school presidents. It wins the school both face and favor from the government.

A report at this year's National Party Congress showed that excessive construction of model high schools is draining government funds that were allocated to help ordinary high schools to pay off their debts.

More than 88 percent of the debt in Wuhan's public high schools comes from model high schools. The schools typically occupy large expanses of land and have lavish facilities and gardens. Many cost more than 100 million yuan to construct.

Reining in wasteful school construction may be a difficult task given the local government's tacit approval.

One middle school being built by the Guangdong Province Office of Education occupies more than 35 acres of land even though it will only enroll 3,000 students in 60 classes. The construction is expected to cost 290 million yuan, of which the provincial government will only pay 175 million yuan. Acquiring debt is the only way to ensure construction is completed.

Wealthy cities are no better off, and many seem eager to transplant their approach to economic prosperity to the education market.

Since 2009, Guangdong province has been popularizing high school education and urging regions to reach an enrollment rate of 85 percent before 2011. Those who achieved the goal a year early could obtain 10 million yuan in subsidies.

The government's supervision of school borrowing has been limited, and thus far there is no rule published to regulate borrowing money or repaying loans.

In February, the Ministry of Education announced it was consulting with other ministries and commissions to find a solution to the problem of high school debt that could make it part of the country's wider goals of debt management.

No plan or proposal has been announced since. ■



Photo by LeTV

UK Shares its Film Culture in Online Festival



Photo by CFP

BY YANG XIN

Britain is promoting its film culture in China through the GREAT British Online Film Festival, a series of online screenings that will continue

through December 12.

The festival brings more than 50 top British features and short films to viewers through LeTV's streaming media plat-

form. Viewers can tune in throughout the festival by visiting filmisgreat.cn, the festival website which has introductions for each film.

Many of the festival films are appearing in China for the first time. The line-up includes 36 features curated by the British Film Institute (BFI) and 20 short films by ShortsTV, the UK's largest short film distributor. Selected films feature some of Britain's most famous actors such as Benedict Cumberbatch, Dame Judi Dench and Martin Freeman.

Viewers who prefer on-site screenings can visit Meridian Space, one of Beijing's most popular cultural venues, where the British Embassy in Beijing is screening some of the festival's award winners and nominees on Sunday evenings.

The film festival includes a series of screenings, panel discussions and networking events in cities across China. Panellists from the British film industry will visit to discuss film-related

issues with their Chinese counterparts, film professionals and student fans. Discussion topics include short film production, funding, festivals and film education as well as presentations from the British Film Institute (BFI) about what the Sino-UK Co-Production Treaty means to the industry.

"The portrayal of British culture and heritage on screen is a great source of fascination for Chinese audiences, so we know there is an incredible appetite for some of our best loved films," said Amanda Nevill, chief executive of the institute. "We can't wait to showcase some of our best examples to Chinese viewers."

The Sino-UK Film Co-Production Treaty was signed in Beijing this April, kickstarting a series of cross-cultural projects and creative partnerships. The GREAT Britain on Screen campaign is one of the first events to come out of the partnership. ■

Still Life Shares Dutch Culture

BY YANG XIN

To celebrate the 20th anniversary of Sister City relations between Amsterdam and Beijing, the Embassy of the Netherlands and FOAM, an Amsterdam-based photography institution, are presenting a collection of Dutch art at Three Shadows Photography Art Centre.

The exhibition features still life works by a number of emerging and

established Dutch artists.

Dutch indie and commercial photography both have a recognizable, fresh style that is also reflected in Dutch design. The images capture the nation's taste for minimalist, experimental, innovative, unconventional and humorous art.

While past photographers captured images that represented reality, many of today's top photographic works are entirely staged. A modern take on the historic artistic concept of still life is the inspiration for today's top art photographers.

This exhibition first appeared at FOAM in 2011 and has since traveled to the cities worldwide. The latest exhibition at Three Shadows includes new works by rising Dutch talents such as Annegien van Doorn, Ola Lanko and Maurice van Es.

Museum management and cooperation is a focal point in the cultural exchange between the Netherlands and China based upon a memorandum of

understanding signed in March 2014. It has been a focal point for cooperation between Amsterdam and Beijing for more than a decade.

"With the help of the Internet and modern social media, the Netherlands and China know each other much better than before," said Eberhard van der Laan, mayor of Amsterdam. "Still/ Life is one way for us to broadcast Dutch traditional culture. From Brussels to Van Gogh, still life has become a way for sharing fragment of culture to broaden our horizons. In the digital era it has even more meaning."

FOAM organized a seminar on museum management at the Central Academy of Fine Arts (CAFA) in late October as a related activity. ■

Three Shadows Art Centre

October 31 – November 30

155A Caochangdi, Chaoyang

Free



Photos by the Royal Netherlands Embassy



A Separation

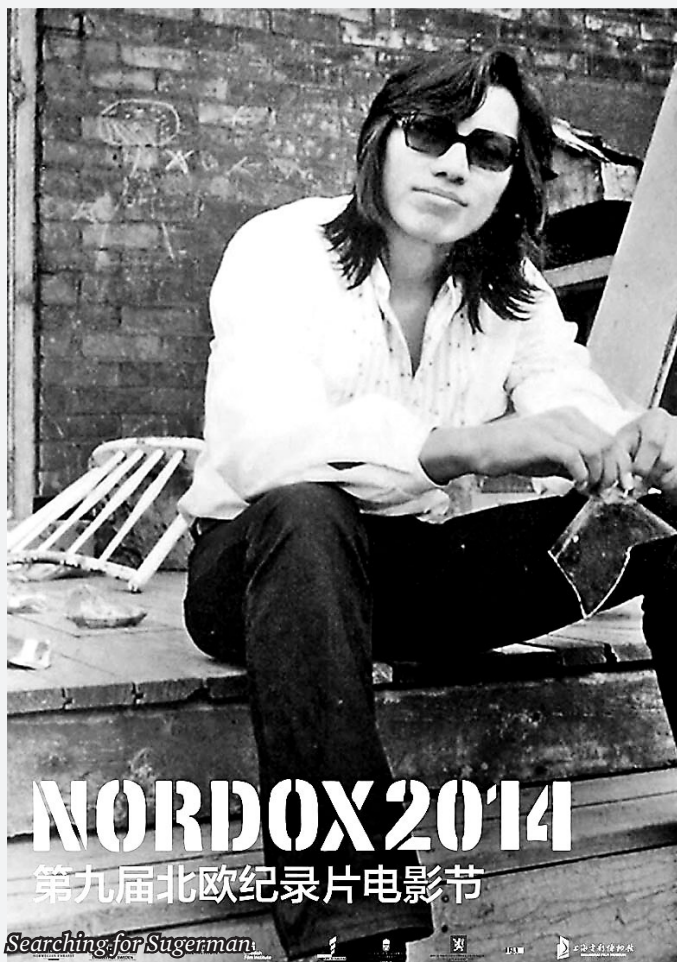


Don't Count Me Out



Bravehearts

Photos by NORDOX



Modern Nordic Life Captured in Documentary

BY YANG XIN

The Nordic Documentary Film Festival (NORDOX) is turning nine this year. The annual platform for bringing Nordic documentaries to China has a lineup of 20 new documentary films from Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Finland and Iceland this year.

UCCA Art Museum will be screening 14 of the films with the remaining six to play at Tsinghua University and Beijing Foreign Studies University. Some directors will attend the campus screen-

ings to answer questions from documentary fans.

Documentary film is like the photo album of a country. NORDOX aims to explore the artistry and relevance of modern documentaries to promote Nordic culture and to provide a cross-cultural platform for people worldwide to discuss social issues.

The 2014 NORDOX focuses on Nordic contemporary life, in particular, teen and female lives. Featuring *Don't Count Me Out* as its opening documen-

tary, the festival follows the highly popular ice bucket challenge to tell a single mother's struggle with ALS, an incurable and deadly disease.

In *Bravehearts*, five teens who dream of changing the world end up on a collision course with reality. In *ASH*, the director documents the effect a volcanic eruption has on farmers' lives. In *Nowhere Home*, one can see how teens struggle for dignity.

Other selected documentaries include *Mercy Mercy: A Portrait of a True Adoption*, which focuses on transnational adoption, and the Academy Award winner *Searching for Sugarman*.

Searching for Sugar Man is a 2012 Swedish-British documentary that details the efforts of two Cape Town fans to uncover the facts of the rumored death of American musician Sixto Rodriguez in the late 1990s. Rodriguez's music, which never took off in the US, was wildly popular in South Africa. ■

nordox.cn

Toulouse Photography Festival Comes to Beijing

BY YANG XIN

between France and China.

An online collection of photographic series for the festival opened earlier this year under the theme Street Snap.

The award-winning series were displayed in Toulouse from September 1 to 30. During the next few days, Chinese photography lovers will be able to enjoy the exhibition at the gallery of Institut Francais in Beijing.

The exhibition at the Institut Francais features 30 pieces selected from photographic series by French photographer Arban Lekuye and Chinese photographer Jocker. ■



Photo by Centre Culturel Francais

Centre Culturel Francais

November 26-December 7

Guangcai International Mansion, 18 Gongti Xi Lu, Chaoyang

Free



Photo by the Royal Norwegian Embassy

Norwegian Art Explores Man-Nature Relationship

BY YANG XIN

Supported by the Norwegian Embassy in Beijing, artist Henning Olav Espedal is presenting *A Sudden Liberating Thought*, an exhibition of works based on the relationship between man and his environment, at Amy Li Gallery.

Born in 1980, Espedal has been living in China for the last six years. As a young artist of the post-industrial era, Espedal creates works that comment on human consciousness of past sufferings.

"If one agrees that ours is a culture dominated by insensitivity to pain and a loss of memory, it is also true that there is simply no laying to rest the scars of violence and the ghosts of past suffering," Espedal said. "As long as there is an awareness of suffering among human beings there must also be art as the objective form of that awareness."

As an embodiment of his perception and examination of anthropocentrism, *A Sudden Liberating Thought* compares Beijing's frequent gray blanket of smog to futuristic dystopian scenarios. Concern with degradation of the natural environment and natural phenomena beyond human control are commonly topics of his work.

Most of the pieces at the exhibition were conceived by turning observations about his immediate surroundings into sculpture, sound, installations and paintings, Espedal said. Most of the works were inspired by his personal contemplation when shifting attention from individual to the cosmic perspective.

"I envision a passage through my own mind and towards what lies beyond. The percept is the landscape before man, in the absence of man," he said. By using a massive, field installation of industrial sculpture and sound, Espedal documents a state of collapse and constant regeneration.

"There is no other city that fits the exhibition's topic so well as Beijing," Espedal said. "Art can really be perceived through daily life. When you walk out of the exhibition hall, you feel no difference between art and reality since smog is everywhere. This is a strong hint that the dystopian future of our imaginations is very close to real life."

"In his audio works, one can sense a weak voice bleating about the oblivion of human civilization," said Bjørn Inge Foll-evaag, curator of the exhibition. ■

Amy Li Gallery

November 15-December 31 (closed Mondays)

54 Caochangdi, Chaoyang

Free



BSPA journalists interviewed Austrian officials.

Beijing Student Press Association Turns 30

In celebration of its 30th anniversary, the Beijing Student Press Association (BSPA) is inviting former members to come back and participate in a celebration on January 5.

Introduction to the BSPA

The Beijing Student Press Association is a news agency established by the Beijing Youth Daily Group in 1985. It has seven branches in

Beijing and three abroad.

Through the platforms of *Beijing Youth Daily*, *Middle School Current Affairs Newspaper* and YNET.com, BSPA offers middle school students who love news an opportunity to take an active role in newswriting and build essential skills for journalistic work. It currently has more than 1,000 juvenile members who file reports from such countries as the UK, US, Canada and Australia.

"Walk the road which was never tried by previous generations; view the sights never seen by your ancestors" is the group's motto. BSPA focuses on real stories and bears witness to historic events.

Footprint of the BSPA

Journalists of the BSPA interviewed many famous international figures of the 1980s such as Joao Havelange, retiring president

of FIFA, and American actor Gregory Peck.

In the 1990s, BSPA cooperated with domestic television stations to design content for CCTV.

In the run up to the 2008 Olympic Games, BSPA carried out a series of special reports on the Beijing Olympic Organizing Committee, interviews with Olympic figures and coverage of major events.

From 2009 to 2011, BSPA stationed members in the China Open media center to cover events from the tennis tournament, Asia's largest tennis event and one of the world's Top 8.

In November 2009, BSPA journalists were invited to visit Hong Kong and meet Huo Zhenting, chairman of the fifth East Asian Games Preparation Committee, and to watch the closing ceremony as guests.

In May 2010, 500 selected BSPA members were sent to cover the Shanghai World Expo. They visited nine embassies, 20 national and enterprise pavilions, and published more than 1,000 relevant articles.

From November 8 to 23 of that year, 60 journalists from the BSPA attended and reported from the Asian Games. They were invited by the Chinese Olympic Committee reception center and visited the International Broadcasting Center of the Asian Games.

In January 2011, the Malaysia Ministry of Education invited 30 student journalists from BSPA to travel to Singapore and Malaysia for a five-day training session in interview skills and cultural communication.

On July 24, 2011, BSPA members went to Austria, Germany and Switzerland for a 12-day reporting event. The journalists also travelled many to Vienna, Salzburg, Munich, Stuttgart, Freiburg, Bern, Lucerne, Geneva and Zurich. ■
(By Shu Pengqian)

BEIJING TODAY

eDigest | 《今日北京》电子文摘

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